



NEWSLETTER

SOUTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

SOUTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF THE MILITARY



VA ANNOUNCES GOVERNOR'S CHALLENGE TO PREVENT SUICIDE

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and the Department of Health and Human Services' (HHS) Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) will convene for the inaugural Governor's Challenge to Prevent Suicide among service members, veterans and their families (SMVF) on Feb. 6, in Washington, D.C.

Through data analysis and their current suicide prevention initiatives, 10 states were formally invited to participate in the Governor's Challenge, of which seven accepted, to include, Arizona, Colorado, Kansas, Montana, New Hampshire, Texas and Virginia.

State leaders will meet to develop a plan to implement the [National Strategy for Preventing Veteran Suicide](#), which provides a framework for identifying priorities, organizing efforts and contributing to a national focus on veteran suicide prevention. The collaboration between the agencies is an example of VA Secretary Wilkie's aim to partner with organizations who share the same goal of preventing suicide among the nation's veteran population.

"Preventing veteran suicide is our number one clinical priority," said VA Secretary Robert Wilkie. "This is a national problem that demands a nationwide response – the Mayor's Challenge and the Governor's Challenge provide a roadmap to develop that national focus of effort."

In March 2018, VA and SAMHSA initiated the [Mayor's Challenge](#) with a local community-level focus. The Governor's Challenge takes this effort to the state level, incorporating existing community strategic plans within respective states and supporting the initiative with state-level influence and resources

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National Strategy for Preventing Veteran Suicide 2018–2028



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs



VA CHALLENGE (CONTINUED)

Earlier this week, Secretary Wilkie mentioned the importance of the Mayor's challenge and Governor's challenge as part of an Op-Ed [outlining VA's progress on suicide prevention for Veterans](#), which is the department's top clinical priority.

VA and HHS will leverage technical expertise from both agencies to ensure the work is codified, evaluated for effectiveness and shared with municipalities to optimize the collective efforts of all partners invested in preventing suicide across the SMVF demographic group.

For more information on VA's suicide prevention campaign, visit

<http://www.veteranscrisisline.net/bethere>. For information on SAMHSA's suicide prevention efforts, visit <https://www.samhsa.gov/suicide-prevention/samhsas-efforts>.

Veterans in crisis or having thoughts of suicide — and those who know a Veteran in crisis — can call the Veterans Crisis Line for confidential support 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and 365 days a year. Call 800-273-8255 and press 1, chat online at [VeteransCrisisLine.net/Chat](https://www.veteranscrisisline.net/Chat), or text to 838255.

Reporters covering Veteran mental health can visit [ReportingOnSuicide.org](https://www.reportingonsuicide.org) for important guidance on how to communicate about suicide.



**NATIONAL
SUICIDE PREVENTION
LIFELINE**
1-800-273-8255 (TALK)

reporting [on suicide.org](https://www.reportingonsuicide.org)

VA'S 3D PRINTING CAPABILITIES

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced that it continues to expand its national integrated virtual 3D printing network that began January 2017 at VA's Puget Sound Healthcare System, growing it from just three hospitals with 3D printing capabilities in early 2017 to 20 at the close of 2018.

This growing network allows VA health care staff to share ideas, solve problems and pool resources on best practice uses of 3D printing for improving veterans' care.

Currently, Veterans Health Administration (VHA) innovators across the 20 sites are using 3D printing to solve a wide range of issues, from presurgical planning to manufacturing hand and foot orthotics.

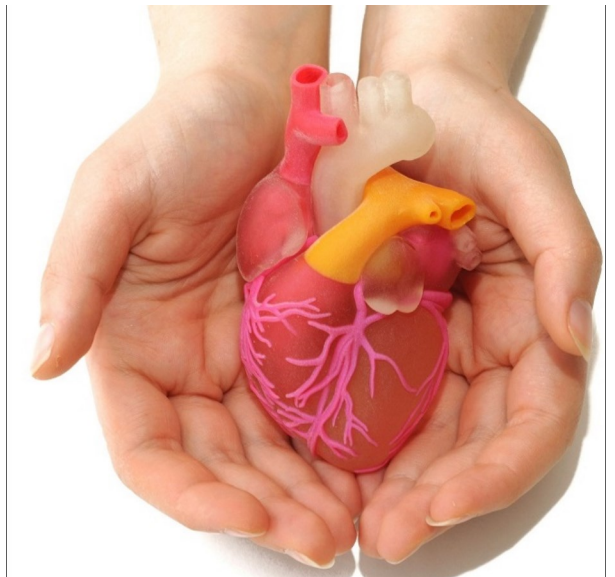
"The VA remains at the forefront of innovative work in 3D printing by expanding our expertise across the VA," said VA Secretary Robert Wilkie. "Through this growing virtual network, the VA continues to help define how 3D printing technology will be used broadly in medicine for the benefit of patients."

At the Puget Sound Healthcare System, prints of model kidneys for patients with renal cancer aid in pre-surgical planning, allowing surgeons to plan their surgical approach to maximize preservation of normal kidney tissue and avoid disturbing unaffected vessels that surround a tumor. This can save doctors up to two hours per surgery, reduce the time patients are under anesthesia, and increase operating room availability.

Occupational therapists are also using 3D printers to manufacture specialized hand orthotics, to provide same-day fitting and delivery, which offers immediate care and reduces the need for multiple visits. The digital blueprint can then be saved, so a replacement can be printed quickly if the orthotic breaks or is damaged.

VA researchers are working with collaborators to create a bioprinting program that uses 3D printing to fabricate replacement tissues that are customized to an individual patient. This would decrease wait times for tissues and organs, reduce the need for grafting surgeries and enable hospital and health care providers to improve the quality and safety of medical procedures. The group is targeting a competitive three-year timeline to have a bioprinted vascular bone implanted into a patient.

The 3D printing virtual Center of Excellence is part of the VHA Innovation Ecosystem. The Ecosystem includes the Diffusion of Excellence Initiative and VHA Innovators Network, two programs that aim to identify and scale innovations and best practices across VA by empowering and enabling employees.



VA MAKING STRIDES ON SUICIDE PREVENTION FOR VETERANS

Under President Trump, the VA has done more in the last two years than it has in decades in reforming the department and improving care and benefits for our nation's heroes.

The VA has made groundbreaking progress, particularly in the areas of accountability, transparency and efficiency across the department while achieving an unprecedented series of legislative successes, including giving greater choice in care to our nation's veterans through the MISSION Act.

As part of these efforts, , including through Telehealth, and same-day mental health services.

In his first year in office, President Trump issued an executive order to support veterans during their transition from uniformed service to civilian life. The order focuses on transitioning service members and veterans in the first 12 months after separation from service, a critical period marked by a high risk for suicide.

This executive order helps ensure that service members learn about VA benefits and start enrollment before becoming veterans, and any newly transitioned veteran can go to a VA medical center or vet center and start receiving mental health care right away. Transitioning service members and veterans will be able to find information quickly online about their eligibility for VA care. Former service members with other-than-honorable discharges can also receive mental health care from VA medical centers.

We've also taken a number of other important steps to reach veterans at risk. Since becoming the VA's director of suicide prevention, Dr. Keita Franklin has added more than 20 staff to her team, worked to improve the office's organizational structure and brought clear lines of responsibility and accountability to the VA's suicide prevention efforts.

We also ramped up our spending on suicide prevention outreach in a big way. The VA spent \$12.2 million on suicide prevention outreach in fiscal year 2018, including \$1.5 million on paid media. During fiscal year 2019, our total budget for suicide prevention is approximately \$47.5 million, and we plan to spend \$20 million of that budget on outreach.

We've also made great use of unpaid media through our [partnership with Johnson & Johnson](#) to produce a [public service announcement](#) featuring Tom Hanks—at no cost to the VA. That partnership helped put VA in the top 10 of the Nielsen ratings for PSAs.

#BeThere
Leave no one behind.



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SUICIDE PREVENTION

(CONTINUED)

More and more Americans are taking advantage of VA's [suicide prevention resources](#). The [Veterans Crisis Line](#) helps about 2,000 callers every day. In the past 10 years, it has answered over 3.5 million calls, engaged in over 413,000 online chats, and responded to over 98,000 text messages. And our suicide prevention coordinators conducted over 22,000 outreach events last year, reaching 2.2 million veterans and family members.

Also, a recent pilot study found that a Safety Planning Intervention program currently in use at five VA facilities has shown to reduce suicidal behavior by 45%, and this intervention will be expanded to all VA facilities nationwide.

Tragically, an average of 20 veterans die by suicide each day. Of those 20, 14 have not received recent VA care. The goal of VA's suicide prevention efforts is not to get every veteran enrolled in VA care, but rather to equip communities to help veterans get the right care, whenever and wherever they need it.

This means using prevention approaches that cut across all sectors in which veterans may interact, and collaborating with Veterans Service Organizations, state and local leaders, medical professionals, criminal justice officials, private employers and many other stakeholders. We're doing this through the Mayor's Challenge in which we work with cities to develop community plans to end veteran suicide, and we're expanding that program to work with Governors on the same approach in their states in February.

Put simply, suicide prevention is much more than intervention at the point of crisis – it is about creating and fostering cultures where veterans and their families thrive. We're all in this together. We must approach this matter compassionately and clinically and build on the important lessons from the past, while expanding our efforts in new directions that make sense.

If any Veteran is in crisis, we encourage him or her to visit the closest VA facility, as all VA health care locations provide same-day urgent mental health care services, or call the Veterans crisis line at 1-800-273-8255.

ACKERT TO LEAVE SFVAHCS

Sara Ackert, Acting Director, announced she has accepted the associate director position at the Central Iowa/Des Moines VA. Des Moines is "home," and this is a career opportunity for her.

Sara reports for duty in Des Moines on February 18.

It is yet unknown who will serve as the Acting Director for the Sioux Falls VA Health Care System.

Please join SDDVA and our staff in thanking Sara for all she has done for our veterans and their families. We wish her the best as she ventures into her new journey.

VA PARTNERS WITH CARINGBRIDGE

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced that it has partnered with [CaringBridge](#), a global nonprofit social network, to aid in veterans' connection and communication with their support communities.

CaringBridge provides free, secure, personal websites — as a dedicated platform — to assist family and friends in communicating with loved ones during any type of health journey.

"Partnerships with organizations such as CaringBridge that can offer impactful support and connection form an integral part of our public health approach to ensure we reach all veterans," said VA Secretary Robert Wilkie. "Collaborations like these can help particularly in preventing veteran suicide, which remains VA's top clinical priorities."

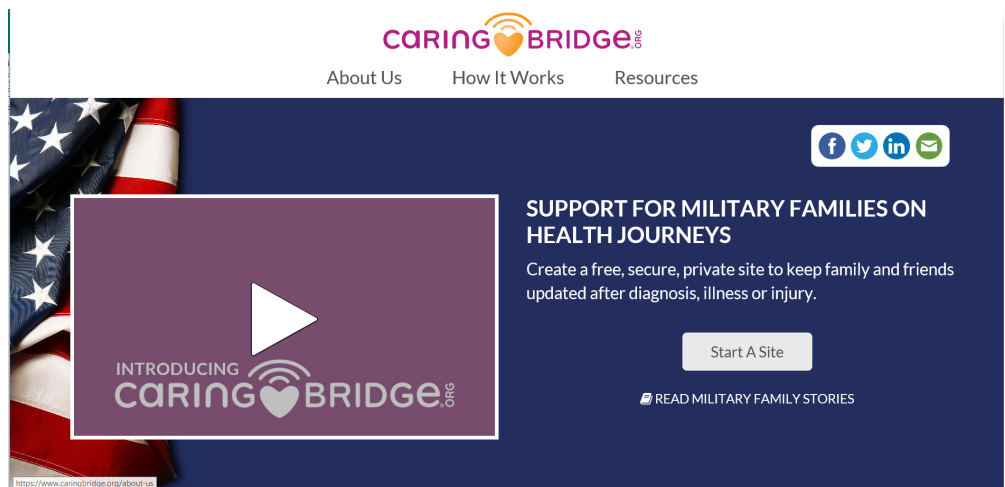
Through this partnership, CaringBridge highlights a tailored destination [page](#) that focuses directly on the needs of service members, veterans and their families. Each customized website supports healing and connection in various ways, keeping families and friends informed and linked using interactive journals and providing access to resources on the site.

In addition to coordinating supportive tasks, CaringBridge has collaborated with the VA medical centers and staff to offer training to help facilitate online outreach and support for veterans and their families. The organization's customer care staff also have been trained on VA resources and how to make referrals to the Veterans Crisis Line.

For more information on how veterans and their loved ones can use CaringBridge throughout their health journeys, visit www.caringbridge.org/military-service/.

Veterans who are in crisis or having thoughts of suicide, and those who know a veteran in crisis, can call the Veteran & Military Crisis Line for confidential support 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year. Call 1-800-273-8255 and Press 1, send a text message to 838255 or chat online at [VeteransCrisisLine.net/Chat](#). Learn about ways to support veterans in your community by visiting <https://www.veteranscrisisline.net/BeThereSupport.aspx>.

Reporters covering veteran mental health issues can visit www.reportingonsuicide.org for important guidance on how to communicate about suicide.



REGISTRATION NOW OPEN FOR 2019 HIRE VETS MEDALLION AWARD PROGRAM

Employers interested in applying for the HIRE Vets Medallion Award Program may now create accounts in preparation for the program launch on January 31. The HIRE Vets Medallion Award Program is the only federal award program that recognizes employers who recruit, retain, and employ veterans. The U.S. Department of Labor recognized 239 recipients of the 2018 HIRE Vets Medallion Program Demonstration Award, honoring employers for their leadership in recruiting, employing, and retaining America's veterans. Honorees include small businesses, community-based nonprofits, and national companies. The HIRE Vets Medallion Award is based on a number of criteria, ranging from veteran hiring and retention to providing veteran-specific resources, leadership programming, dedicated human resources, and compensation and tuition assistance programs – with requirements varying for large, medium, and small employers.

Employers interested in applying for the 2019 HIRE Vets Medallion Award Program can now create an account online. Applications will open to employers on January 31 and run through April 30, 2019. For more information and to create an account for the HIRE Vets Medallion Program and Award, please visit www.HireVets.gov.



Free Drop-In Legal Clinic



UNIVERSITY OF
SOUTH DAKOTA



State Bar of *South Dakota*

JOIN US ON:

- **February 21, 2019** from **9am-3pm** at the **American Legion Codington Post 17** located at 1412 9th Ave SW (HWY 212), Watertown, SD 57201.
- **February 22, 2019** from **9am-3pm** at the **Sioux Falls DAV** located at 1519 W 51st St, Sioux Falls, SD 57105. *Shuttles will be providing transportation from the Sioux Falls VA Medical Center to the DAV.*

Join the Veterans Legal Education Group and the South Dakota Low Income Taxpayer Clinic for a FREE LEGAL CLINIC. Legal professionals, along with student attorneys, will be on site to address and support the Military community with any of their legal questions and needs.

FREE FOR ALL SERVICE MEMBERS, THEIR FAMILIES, AND VETERANS!

EVENT CONTACT:

Austin Schaefer
VLEG President
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SUPPORTED BY:

South Dakota Young Lawyers Section, University of
South Dakota School of Law, the South Dakota
State Bar, Military OneSource, and the South
Dakota Veterans Affairs

UPCOMING EVENTS

Jan 18—Sioux Falls Military Appreciation Resource Fair—Central Church (Ralph Rogers Road) 10:00 am—9:00 pm (CT)

Jan 20—VFW Baseball Annual Meeting—Madison VFW Post Home—10:00 am (CT)

Jan 21—State Offices Closed—Martin Luther King Day

Jan 22—VABHHCS Whole Health Program—Hot Springs Building 12—Room A002—10:00 am—12:00 pm (MT)

Jan 28-29—VFW State Legislative Conference—Pierre

Jan 31—Veterans Town Hall—DAV Headquarters—Sioux Falls (1519 W. 51st Street) 6:00 pm (CT)

Feb 2—USS South Dakota Commissioning

Feb 6—American Legion Legislative Reception—Post 8—Pierre—5:00 to 8:00 pm (CT)

Feb 8-10—American Legion Mid Winter Conference—Holiday Inn—Spearfish

Feb 12—VABHHCS Whole Health Program—Ft Meade Building 145—Room 239—1:00 pm—3:00 pm (MT)

Feb 18—State Offices Closed—President's Day

Feb 21—Drop In Legal Services—American Legion Post 17 (1412 9th Ave SW—Watertown (9:00 am—3:00 pm (CT)

Feb 22—Drop in Legal Services—DAV (1519 W. 51st Street)—Sioux Falls (9:00 am—3:00 pm) (CT)

Feb 26—VABHHCS Whole Health Program—Hot Springs Building 12—Room A002—10:00 am—12:00 pm (MT)

Mar 3-7—VFW Legislative Conference—Washington, DC

Mar 8—VABHHCS VSO Congressional Forum—VFW Post 1273 (420 Main Street—Rapid City—10:00 am (MT)

Mar 12—VABHHCS Whole Health Program—Ft Meade Building 145—Room 239—1:00 pm—3:00 pm (MT)

Mar 26—VABHHCS Whole Health Program—Hot Springs Building 12—Room A002—10:00 am—12:00 pm (MT)

May 7-9 SDDVA Mini Conferences (Rapid City, Pierre and Sioux Falls)

May 17-19—DAV Convention—Hilton Garden Inn (5300 S. Grand Circle) —Sioux Falls

July 20-24—National VFW Convention—Orlando, FL

Aug 26-29—SDDVA Benefit School



Audry Ricketts, Public Information Officer

South Dakota Department of the Military <http://military.sd.gov>

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